

**FORT LAUDERDALE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA)
CITY COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
OCTOBER 2, 2001**

Mayor Naugle called the meeting to order at 6:52 P.M. Roll was called, and a quorum was present.

Present: Mayor Naugle
Commissioner Cindi Hutchinson
Commissioner Gloria F. Katz
Commissioner Carlton Moore
Commissioner Tim Smith

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager
City Attorney
City Clerk

Konover Site Development Proposals

Mayor Naugle stated that this item related to the development proposals received by the City for the Konover site. The City Manager said that when this had last been discussed, Commissioner Moore had asked that the matter be deferred so members of the community would have an opportunity to hear about both proposals. He reported that the meeting had been held at the Mizell Library, and both proposers had presented their projects to the community. The City Manager said the purpose of today's meeting was to determine a ranking of the proposals and authorize negotiations with the top-ranked firm.

Commissioner Moore stated that there had been a public meeting and a district meeting in this regard, and he saw no need for another presentation from the proposers. The City Manager advised that there had been no substantive changes in the proposals since their original submission. In fact, the only difference was that the City had assured itself that the community had been well informed in this regard.

Commissioner Moore distributed copies of a letter he had written to the editor of the "Miami Herald" in response to an article titled "Favoritism." He explained that the article intended to indicate that he might have had a favorite in this process, and his response had indicated that both development teams were interested in developing a parcel of property he wanted to see developed, and both teams included individuals with whom he'd had long relationships. Commissioner Moore felt the reporter had come close to slander in the way he had portrayed the facts, although it appeared the newspaper had chosen not to publish his response. Nevertheless, he wanted the community to know all sides of the story.

Commissioner Moore asked all those present who lived within the City limits of Fort Lauderdale to stand. He said he was proud that two quality developers had "come to the table." He felt both developers had offered a "diamond in the rough." Commissioner Moore had been waiting to see this property developed so it would help redevelop the entire northwest quadrant, and he was proud that the City Commission had supported the \$3 million acquisition of the property.

Commissioner Moore pointed out that the Commission had also supported the expenditure of \$500,000 to purchase the Jamaican Domino Club, and to spend the money necessary to acquire the Lake View Apartments owned by the Housing Authority. He was glad it had been recognized that the Konover property was essential to create the necessary critical mass for redevelopment.

Commissioner Moore noted that some people had not believed there would be any interest on the part of developers, but five responses to the RFP had been received. He believed that each of the two finalized had offered over \$6 million for development of this parcel, and he had assured himself that both of the finalists had provided good projects in the past. Commissioner Moore had found their products to be well managed and well maintained, and no matter which proposal was approved tonight, he knew it would be a vast improvement on this site. He said he was ready to cast his vote for the redevelopment of this parcel.

Commissioner Katz pointed out that the whole economic scheme of things had changed since September 11, 2001. She believed the real estate market had been affected, and no one knew what the future would bring. Further, the country was in a recession, and no one knew how long it would last. Commissioner Katz did not think anyone knew who would obtain financing and who would not. She had been advised that there would be a lot of office space empty over the next few years, and she hoped not just one type of development would be considered. Commissioner Katz hoped for a mixed-use project, which could be housing and retail, or housing with hotel, office park, and retail uses incorporated with bike paths and other amenities.

Commissioner Katz thought the City should start with residential housing, which would begin to change the character of the property. Then, the developer could bring in retail uses to service those homes, followed perhaps by an office park and a hotel use over the long term. She also felt that whatever was decided, the City should be very careful in its negotiations because she did not want to be "stuck" if financing fell through or other circumstances occurred. Commissioner Katz understood the community was evenly divided on what was desired, but the Commission had to consider the future of the entire City.

Commissioner Smith asked those in the audience who supported the Broward Barron proposal and lived within the City limits to stand.

Ms. Robin McBrice, President of Lakeview Garden Apartments, supported Commissioner Moore.

Mr. Chuck McKirahan, 4517 Northwest 18th Avenue, Deerfield Beach, stated that CL Financial had studied this project for about a year but had reached the conclusion to pass due to other developments it had underway on the beach. However, a proposal similar to the Broward Barron proposal had seemed the most financially feasible.

Ms. Evelyn Lewis, 426 Northwest 9th Avenue, did not feel the last piece of the waterfront should be given over to all commercial uses. She believed the community needed an opportunity to "deliver on the River." Ms. Lewis pointed out that people were being displaced from their homes, and they needed a place to go. She desired housing that would populate the area and support commercial uses. Ms. Lewis supported a mixed-use project very soon.

Ms. Natalie Vern, 404 Northwest 18th Avenue, wanted the community to build on what was already there. She felt the City should stick with what the community knew was best.

Mr. Nat Wilkerson said he owned property at 409 Northwest 20th Street, 438 Northwest 20th Street, and four properties at 6th Street and 15th Avenue. He felt that a mixed-use project was the best way to go because he did not want to “put all the eggs in one basket.” Mr. Wilkerson wanted to see jobs generated, and this was one of the most prized pieces of property on the west side of the tracks, which belonged to them. It was also one of the most accessible properties in the City.

Mr. Gerald Wilcox stated that he was a member of the community, and his father had been a teacher at Dillard School. He was also a business owner in the community, and he had studied the proposed projects. Mr. Wilcox agreed both projects had a lot of potential, but the Barron development would produce 8,000 jobs. He pointed out that a home could not buy a job, but a job could buy a home. Mr. Wilcox understood the other proposal involved townhomes in the \$150,000 price range, so many people who lived in the community could not afford those homes. He felt the more pragmatic approach was the Barron’s project approach with a period of time in which retail uses would come in to provide jobs in the community.

Ms. Marsha Goldsby, of Lauderdale Manors, liked both projects but she agreed with Commissioner Katz. She thought the Barron project was something that should be explored and supported that proposal.

Mr. Fred Allen said he had grown up in this community, and he was pleased that two good proposals had been submitted, but it appeared most of the community supported the Broward Barron mixed-use proposal. He was a little concerned that the Barron Group was the only one with experience in developing a site in this manner, and he felt the local business community should be supported. Mr. Allen felt the Barron proposal was the most reasonable way of approaching this project.

Mr. Gino Jamison, 1716 Southwest 5th Court, desired a mixed-use project on this site, and he was pleased with the interest in the project within the community. He felt affordable housing was long overdue, and he felt a mixed-use project would be best. Mr. Jamison hoped the Commission would support a mixed-use project in this area.

Mr. Michael Kasten, 1409 Northeast 16th Court, noted that the Commission had a difficult decision because the potential of the area involved the economic success of one project over another and the positive impact the site could have on the neighborhood and the City. He did not think anyone knew that either plan would succeed, and no one could guarantee that one plan would generate more revenue than another would. Since no one could predict the economy, he felt the potential positive impact of the project would best be served by a “24/7” venue. Mr. Kasten felt the best scenario for the City of the two would be the Crosswinds Community project and urged the Commission to look toward previous pioneers who had brought previously blighted neighborhoods alive with their visions and investments. He felt the best possible outcome, however, would be a joint project that encompassed both proposals.

Ms. Jennie Brooks, 2301 Northwest 15th Court, introduced *Mr. Ray Jordan*, Vice-President of Dillard Park Association. She stated that this Association had voted unanimously in support of the Broward Barron project. Ms. Brooks believed this developer had proven a willingness to work with the community, and it was a local company. The Association felt the City should work with a local firm with a proven track record.

Ms. Deborah Frederick, 405 Northwest 17th Avenue, said she had rarely seen a City Commission meeting at which residents of one neighborhood appeared in support of a project in another neighborhood. Having reviewed both of the proposals, it had become clear that there were a lot of issues. She felt that housing in the northwest area was a critical issue, and she did not think a commercial development would be in the City's best interests at this time. Ms. Frederick supported the Crosswind Communities project.

Mr. Michael Ferber, 422 Northeast 2nd Avenue, said he was a resident of the CRA and he had been on the CRA Board when it had recommended acquisition of this failed shopping center and the Domino Club to assemble this property. He advised that the premise behind that recommendation involved the fact that this site had unique qualities that made it desirable for a significant commercial development of a regional nature. Therefore, Mr. Ferber supported the Broward Barron project because it would take advantage of the unique qualities of the site and provide a regional significance. Further, he felt it would be advantageous in terms of other initiatives underway in the Sweeting Estates, Dorsey Riverbend and Midtown because it was consistent of the CRA goals.

Mr. Matt Walters, 412 Northwest 18th Avenue, said he was the Chair of the Front Porch in Dorsey Riverbend. He felt any development in this area would have positive impact on this Front Porch community, and both of the proposed projects would be beneficial. Mr. Walters hoped that the developer selected would work with the Front Porch community in this area, which encompassed several civic associations, and he thanked both developers for their cooperation thus far. He stated that his Council had reviewed these projects, but neither project had received a majority vote.

Mr. Pete Feldman, 418 Northeast 5th Street, noted that the 7th/9th Avenue Connector project had been voted on today, and he was proud that investments were being made in the CRA. He felt this site had tremendous importance to the CRA, and the Advisory Board had held hundreds of meetings over the past five years about redevelopment of the CRA. Mr. Feldman reported that the community had repeatedly indicated that there should be a focus on housing on the Sistrunk Corridor. He stated that the commercial development would follow the housing, and that had been the focus of the CRA Advisory Board.

Mr. Feldman pointed out that Regal Trace had been completed, and the Sweeting Estate homes were pending development. In addition, New Visions homes and the River Gardens homes were also underway, and there were various housing projects underway in other neighborhoods around the area. Mr. Feldman felt those projects clearly indicated that the CRA and the City Commission had been listening to the community and focusing on the goal of repopulating the Sistrunk Corridor.

Mr. Feldman stated that it had always been the CRA's position that the Konover property needed to be a regional business site to produce tax increment monies. He noted that it would be a long-range project, and both developers were proposing what were basically commercial developments. Mr. Feldman said that the Barron team had been working side by side with the CRA for the past several years, and he felt that team should continue to be a partner.

Ms. Helene Preder, 3681 Northwest 21st Street, believed that commercial developments would be moving west because there was no more land in the east.

Mr. Chris Veir said he was not a resident of the subject area, but that did not mean he did not care about the community. He felt the City Commission was doing something positive for the community, and he hoped this project would be considered in the context of the history of Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Linda Gatlin, 2301 Northwest 38th Terrace, had been born and raised in this area, and her family owned a restaurant on 6th Street. She had spoken with many family members and friends about this, and she had heard there was a great fear that “white folk would come over here and buy the best piece of property there was.” Ms. Gatlin pointed out that “white folk already owned property over here,” so she did not think that should be a fear or concern. She advised that she was a home ownership counselor for the Urban League, and she was seeing more and more people who needed help to buy homes. Ms. Gatlin supported the Crosswind Communities project because it included housing, and she favored a multiuse proposition.

Ms. Jeanette King, 2780 South Oakland Forest Drive, said she worked with youth between the ages of 18 and 21, and she helped them get jobs and fulfill their dreams, which included moving back into their communities. She stated that most of her clients were from the 33311 zip code, and she felt the Crosswinds project would allow people of all colors to purchase homes, buy businesses, play together in area parks, and live together. Ms. King pointed out that Delevoe Park was across from the subject property, and she hoped the view from the park would be a view of homes rather than commercial uses.

Mr. Mickey Hinton, of the Durrs Homeowners’ Association, said he was speaking only for himself this evening because his Association had been left out of the process. He hoped the proposals really considered his neighborhood. Mr. Hinton said that he lived in a poor neighborhood, and he couldn’t even eat in his own backyard because of the flies from the trash transfer station. He stated that the neighborhood was suffering and dying, and he supported the Crosswind Communities mixed-use project.

Mr. Charles Wilkerson, 438 and 409 Northwest 20th Avenue, wanted the children of the community to reside in nice homes. He wanted them to get good educations and live in \$150,000 to \$200,000 homes and return to the community from college rather than moving west after college. Mr. Wilkerson believed there were young people who could afford to move back to Fort Lauderdale now, but there were no homes. He supported the Crosswind Communities project.

Mayor Naugle suggested that each of the proposers provide a last address to the Commission, but first he wished to recognize *State Representative Chris Smith*. Representative Smith said he had tried to get a price from Crosswinds today, and the lowest quote he had received had been \$140,000 for a condominium. He did not think black people would buy \$140,000 condominiums and pointed out that there were only two black families living in City View where units cost \$90,000. Representative Smith said he lived at 1740 Northwest 3rd Court on the River, and his house was only valued at \$115,000.

Representative Smith wanted to bring economic development to this district, and he felt the Broward Barron project would bring economic development. Further, the Crosswind Community had not even bothered to return his phone calls. He thought the Broward Barron project would bring to the community what it needed, and he believed there were numerous vacant lots that could be used for housing in the Dorsey Riverbend neighborhood. Representative Smith thought it was comical to suggest that \$140,000 condominiums would provide housing to area residents, and he supported Commissioner Moore’s position.

Mr. Donald Hall, representing Crosswind Communities, introduced *Mr. Lieberman*, who was the President. He believed the Commission had heard a lot of support for this mixed-use project. He pointed out that not only was there community support for the project, it also represented good planning. Mr. Hall felt it was essential to develop the character of the site in order to ensure the success of the commercial uses in the area and provide neighborhood amenities. He advised that Mr. Lieberman had a great deal of experience with these kinds of projects, and he pointed out that the Crosswinds proposal also included over a million square feet of office. Mr. Hall said that the regional nature of the site was not lost on this developer, although residential uses were also essential to the success of the project.

Mr. Lieberman said he had been built more urban projects than any other developer in the country. He thought it was folly to think that African American people could not afford \$150,000 to \$175,000 homes. Mr. Lieberman stated that he was currently selling homes in a devastated area of Detroit for \$250,000 to \$300,000. In this case, he believed that this project would raise the value of all homes within several miles, and it would have a positive impact on everyone in the area.

Mr. Lieberman stated that he had been developing property for his entire life, and he had never contacted State representatives in the process. He felt it was unfair to cause that kind of influence within a planning commission, a board, or other zoning group. Mr. Lieberman had never seen any other developer do this either.

Mr. Ehrlich Crane said he had met with several community groups on behalf of the Crosswind Corporation, and the goal had been to speak to the inclusion plan. He advised that his firm had been chastised early on for not having significant representation of the local community on his team, so a team had been formed representing all facets of the community. Mr. Crane believed his inclusion plan of 20% participation by minorities throughout this project was very significant. He also felt several members of the team would bring the necessary inclusion to identify firms in order to create opportunities in all aspects of the project. Mr. Crane pointed out that the neighborhood retail uses proposed would also generate jobs for members of the community.

Mr. Mark Singerman felt the Crosswind Communities project provided the best of both proposals by including a regional business park, retail use, office use, and residential uses. He believed this project offered everything everyone in this room wanted.

Mr. George Rahael, President of Broward Barron, acknowledged that the Crosswinds project had mixed uses and something for everyone, including a million square feet of office space. Therefore, that project, too, recognized that the offices were necessary as the engine for economic development. Mr. Rahael felt the fundamental difference between the projects was that the Barron project recognized the need to come west and north to Sistrunk Boulevard, while the Crosswinds project hugged I-95 and did not venture into the community. Therefore, he was not sure how much impact that would have on the redevelopment of Sistrunk Boulevard.

Mr. Rahael pointed out that the Crosswinds project went south in its second phase, while the Barron project took on the challenge of going northward all the way up Sistrunk Boulevard to the African American Library. He felt that made sense not just for this property, but for the larger community and nearby neighborhoods. Mr. Rahael thought the housing effort should focus on the properties within neighborhoods that were vacant or in need of redevelopment because housing was a critical component of any community. He preferred to see single-family homes, and his company had already purchased 10 lots for a future housing program where houses already existed in the community.

Commissioner Moore thanked everyone for their participation in this process and described some of the other projects he had viewed to prepare for this decision. He noted that repopulating the northwest quadrant had been under discussion for several years, and the key to empowerment was investing in communities regardless of race. Commissioner Moore felt every member of the community had ample opportunities to participate in this process, particularly since district meetings were held on a monthly basis, so there was no reason why anyone should feel they had been left out of the process.

Commissioner Moore displayed photographs of a mixed-use development in Jupiter. He pointed out that the housing was elegant, and rents started at \$1,200 per month. Commissioner Moore reported that the housing element of the project was filled, but the other uses were empty. He pointed out several other projects in Fort Lauderdale in which the residential units were full, but the retail spaces were vacant. Further, offices were being built and filled everywhere.

Commissioner Moore supported the Broward Barron project because that developer had demonstrated a willingness to invest in the community. He pointed out that the firm had purchased the old Pic 'N Pay property, which was something everyone wanted to see changed, and the company was buying vacant residential land to construct homes. Commissioner Moore wanted a partner in the redevelopment of the community that would empower the people and encouraged support for the Broward Barron project.

Commissioner Smith said he had been disappointed by Mr. Wilkerson's comments. Commissioner Hutchinson agreed she had been disappointed by talk about the east and west side of the tracks. She lived in a neighborhood with people of every race and creed, and there was no community unless everyone lived together. Commissioner Hutchinson was not convinced that this was the best site for the residential component. She viewed this as the "beginning vision" for Broward Boulevard, and she felt the Broward Barron group understood that corridor. Commissioner Hutchinson supported the Barron proposal, and she felt there were a lot of opportunities up and down the Broward Boulevard corridor.

Mayor Naugle acknowledged this was a difficult decision, but having two strong proposals for this site was a good problem to have. He pointed out that everyone had put in a lot of effort to implement some of the initiatives underway in the area, and he agreed with Mr. Wilkerson that it would be best not to "put all the eggs in one basket." Mayor Naugle was worried by an emphasis only on office use, and he preferred the mixed-use development of residential, retail and office uses. He felt it would be more prudent to spread the risk, and he liked the idea of a community in which people of all races and colors could purchase homes and walk to work.

Mayor Naugle believed the majority of the Commission supported the Broward Barron proposal, and he acknowledged the contributions this firm had made in cleaning up blighted areas of Fort Lauderdale. However, he worried that purely office use would be difficult in today's economy so, for that reason, he supported the Crosswind Communities project.

Commissioner Katz said her concern was that 2 million square feet of office space would not be an easy sell. Further, she did not think the promise of 8,000 jobs was realistic. Commissioner Katz was more interested in a combination of housing and other uses. As Commissioner Smith had mentioned, she wondered if there could be some kind of partnership to address the entire 50 acres. She asked if the RFP would allow it.

Commissioner Katz pointed out that both developers had different kinds of experience, and there was a tremendous amount of office space downtown. She wondered if there was some way to blend the two projects, assuming both developers were willing. The City Attorney advised that the RFP required establishment of a ranking on the 18-acre project. It also required that a conceptual master plan be provided for the entire 50-acre anticipated build-out area. He stated that the proposers could unite at any time and submit something to the Commission jointly for evaluation. Procedurally, he felt the Commission should rank the two proposals and authorize commencement of negotiations. The City Attorney noted that action would not prohibit examining plans for the entire 50 acres as part of the master plan and allow the two developers to consider a joint proposal for future discussion.

Commissioner Smith pointed out that there were two excellent firms interested in the property, and he thought it would be great if both could be encouraged to be part of this revitalization effort. He felt Broward Barron could concentrate on the office aspect of the development while Crosswind Communities could address residential, mixed uses. Commissioner Smith believed there were opportunities in this respect, and this was a good opportunity to explore the idea.

Commissioner Moore said he did not see any housing on 62nd Street, and he did not see anyone advocating "smart" growth on that road with the Swerdlow property. No one was suggesting mixed-use development in that area, and it was not being proposed at Powerline Road. He stated that commercial and mixed-use projects were not being proposed because of the past failures of those types of projects. Commissioner Moore felt "black office space campuses" were lacking in the midtown area, and he thought the Broward Barron project would be smart growth.

Commissioner Smith wondered if either of the proposers were interested in a joint venture. Mr. Lieberman could not comment on that idea at this time, although he was open to the possibility and had done joint ventures in the past. Mr. Rahael felt housing was necessary, and he was sure Broward Barron could work with Crosswind Communities.

Motion made by Commissioner Moore and seconded by Commissioner Hutchinson to accept the proposal of Broward Barron as being in the public interest and in furtherance of the purposes of the Community Redevelopment Act; to authorize the negotiation of a development agreement between the CRA and Broward Barron providing for the conveyance of real property to Broward Barron and the redevelopment of such property in accordance with the community redevelopment plan and the terms of the development agreement; and, further authorizing the CRA Executive Director to notify Broward Barron of this action and the preconditions to commencement of negotiations. Roll call showed: YEAS: Commissioners Smith, Moore and Hutchinson. NAYS: Commissioner Katz and Mayor Naugle.

There being no further business before the Board of Commissioners, the meeting was adjourned at 8:43 P.M.